

## **King County Office of Emergency Management Podcasts**

### ***Disasters: Are you ready?***

#### **Electrical Outage Preparedness Tips**

There are many causes of electrical power outages. We can have them due to windstorms, ice and snow storms, earthquakes, terrorism, brown and blackouts due to system overloads or equipment failures. Even “Fried Squirrels” who bite into the wrong nut looking conductor can cause an outage.

Whatever the cause, it means there is no electrical juice flowing to your house or business. I was wondering what the impact to Bellevue Square shopping center was by being out of power and shut down on the last full shopping weekend before Christmas. The dollar number must be big!

So what can you do to become personally prepared for power outages. I'll use the 3 Days, 3 Ways to explain:

First Way—Have a plan. Sit down with your family before an event and discuss how you will communicate with one another. If kids are home alone when the power goes out, what should they do, and more importantly perhaps not do, in order for them to be safe. Trust me they will remember these planning sessions and when they are adults they will probably relay to their families safe behaviors. Things like don't go outside in the middle of windstorm and stand under big trees to get a good look (my son did that a few years back). After the storm, don't go wandering the neighborhood and crossing or going near downed power lines. Power lines can kill!

Second Way—Put together a disaster supplies kit for at home, in the car and at work. Refuel your vehicles before a storm hits since as many people learned gas stations may not have power or those that do, a vast supply of fuel. Stock your kit with things you'll need to stay warm and dry. Candles are no longer recommend since they are a secondary fire hazard. Better is having flashlights and extra batteries. If you must use candles, don't leave them unattended with children or pets. Many a home has burned down because of those actions.

As we saw in the last windstorm event there are other significant safety concerns. It seems that following every major disaster that includes power outages we hear of people dying from the improper use of generators and from people trying to cook inside their homes with charcoal or other petroleum fueled stoves, lamps or heating devices. Generators have to be only used outside and not even inside a garage. Carbon monoxide poisoning is the threat. We've seen immigrant populations be most impacted and at risk. In order to reach these communities with critical safety information we will need the help of neighbors who understand the risks and check on their neighbors to be sure they are not putting their families in danger.

Which leads me to share the Third Way to become better prepared. You can do that by becoming more involved in your community. Get out and meet your neighbors. Know who lives right next to you and what special situations they may have like elderly persons, latch key kids, or other special needs situations. Learn CPR and take a first aid course from the American Red Cross. If your city has Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) consider attending training on how you can combine your skills with others to help get everyone through a disaster.

It is early in 2007 so why not make disaster preparedness one of your New Year's resolutions—it will make a huge difference how you and your family fare in the next windstorm or earthquake.